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AUTHOR Wilson, Elizabeth K.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Research in teacher education suggests the need for alternative approaches to the traditional triad (cooperating teacher, teacher intern, college supervisor) of student teaching or teacher internship programs. This study examines the Clinical Master Teacher (CMT) Program at the University of Alabama. Study participants included 79 Clinical Master Teachers (CMTs) at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels, each meeting the following criteria: (1) five years teaching experience; (2) at least three semesters as a cooperating teacher; (3) participation in professional activities; (4) recommendation by the principal; (5) review by a panel which includes school-based and university-based members; and (6) approval by the university faculty. The CMTs are grouped in teams and work cooperatively in the supervision of a group of teacher interns assigned to the entire team. While each CMT has primary responsibility for one or two assigned interns each semester, all CMTs are encouraged to work with all interns assigned to the team. Findings indicate that the CMTs involved in this program experienced professional growth, particularly in their supervisory abilities; increased self confidence; elevated status among their colleagues; and reduced teacher isolation. Although CMTs were critical of the university supervisor in the traditional triad, they viewed the university's role in the CMT Program as supportive and positive, and felt that university resources were used more effectively in the CMT Program than in the traditional triad. The CMT Program also strengthened the collegial relationships the teachers enjoyed at their school sites. (Contains 15 references.) (ND)

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Empowering Teachers as Full Partners in the Preparation of New Teachers

Elizabeth K. Wilson

Susan M. McClelland

Ronald A. Banaszak

University of Alabama

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Empowering Teachers as Full Partners in the Preparation of New Teachers

In recent years, researchers have examined the student teaching experience or teacher internship. While some studies (e.g., Wilson & Readence, 1993) have concluded that a variety of factors (e.g., cooperating teacher, intern biography, methods instruction) have an impact on the beginning teacher, rarely is the college supervisor mentioned as an influential factor in this development (Boydell, 1986). Subsequently, national commissions have recommended the development of programs that would create cadres of teachers who would combine the two roles of cooperating teacher and college supervisor into one known as the "clinical master teacher" (Carnegie Task Force, 1986; The Holmes Group, 1986). This presentation will explore the changes made in the student teacher or teacher internship program and how these changes have influenced those involved.

The importance of the student teaching experience in the preparation of new teachers has been well-documented by researchers in teacher education (Brimfield & Leondard, 1983; Lortie, 1975). This has been supported by inservice teachers, who, when reflecting on their preparation, generally describe student teaching as the most influential component of their preparation (Clark, Smith, Newby & Cook, 1985). Despite the impact of the student teaching experience, it is roundly criticized for a variety of deficiencies. These criticisms include the lack of an explicit curriculum during the student teaching experience which is described by Stones (1984) as an apprenticeship "where good teaching is to be caught and not taught." Another criticism of this component in the teacher preparation process is the lack of integration with university coursework (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1989). For instance, when discrepancies occurred between the perspectives of the cooperating teacher and the university faculty, in many cases, the pedagogical knowledge of the university faculty was supplanted by that of the cooperating teacher (Palonsky & Jacobson, 1988; Zevin, 1974). The uneven quality of supervision provided by the traditional triad is also seen as a major weakness of the teacher internship (Zeichner, 1990).

Research in teacher education which has examined the traditional role of the college supervisor as part of a triad (cooperating teacher--teacher intern--college supervisor) has concluded that, despite the huge resources invested in supervision

from the university, college supervisors appear to be rather ineffective in their roles (Boydell, 1986). According to Boydell (1986), there are a number of factors related to this: (a) the college supervisor spends an insufficient amount of time in the classroom and may be thought of as a visitor to the classroom and school rather than a supervisor, (b) the supervisor may not be able to effectively combine assessment and support, (c) interns seem to mistrust the evaluation of the supervisor, particularly when that evaluation is different from that of the cooperating teacher, and (d) the supervisor frequently fails to make the important theory-practice connection. As a result, a number of alternative approaches to the traditional triad have been proposed.

One such approach suggests that before teacher education can have an influence on the preservice teacher, the schools must change. Emans (1983) suggests that the supervisors "main influence would be on the cooperating teacher, and indirectly, on the school environment" (p. 16). Such programs would allow supervisors to work in a supportive rather than dominant role (Kagan & Tippins, 1993). Subsequently, the cooperating teacher would become a member of a cohort of teachers, or clinical master teachers, that would assume responsibility for supervising teacher interns in the field while the supervisor would still act as a liaison for the university but would work in a staff development capacity for the classroom teachers. Further, the clinical master teachers would collaborate with university professors as they plan the curriculum of teacher education programs (Kagan & Tippins, 1993). Further, Kagan and Tippins (1993) concluded that teachers involved in such a program "had grown in self confidence and emerged from this with a new sense of self-confidence" (p. 71).

This study will examine a program which was developed with the objectives described above. Using a variety of data sources, the researchers will focus on the program's effects on the classroom teacher.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study included 79 Clinical Master Teachers (CMTs) at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels in a southeastern community. CMTs are carefully screened and selected for this program. Each teacher must meet the following criteria: (a) five years teaching experience, (b) a

minimum of three semesters as a successful cooperating teacher, (c) evidence of participation in professional activities (e.g., presentations at professional meetings, staff development presentations, service/leadership in the school/school system, (d) recommendation by the principal, (e) review by a panel which includes school-based and university-based members, and (f) approval by the university faculty.

Description of the Clinical Master Teacher (CMT) Program. At the University of Alabama, CMTs, viewed as outstanding teachers and supervisors, are selected to participate in this alternative supervisory program at the elementary, middle school, and secondary levels. CMTs fulfill the traditional roles of both the campus-based supervisor and the school-based cooperating teacher. The CMTs are grouped in teams consisting of four to six members and work cooperatively in the supervision of a group of teacher interns assigned to the entire team. While each CMT has primary responsibility for one or two assigned interns each semester, all CMTs are encouraged to work with all interns assigned to the team through observations, critique of intern planning and classroom instruction, and other professional activities such as intern seminars.

Appointed as school-based faculty to the College of Education, CMTs are entitled to all university benefits awarded to adjunct faculty. CMTs are responsible for assigning the teacher internship grade to their intern(s); the fact that the CMT holds faculty status makes the grade assignment responsibility legal under university regulations and Alabama law. As adjunct faculty members, CMTs are appointed for the full academic year and must be reappointed for each succeeding year. Each CMT is paid $250.00 for supervising each full-time intern; cooperating teachers receive $40.00. The total cost of the program is about the same as supervision by graduate students or adjunct faculty, but is considerably lower than supervision by fulltime faculty members.

Campus-based faculty assigned to the CMT program work with the CMTs and CMT teams in the supervision of the interns. Currently, there is a coordinator for the elementary program and a coordinator for middle/high school programs. Their involvement includes: (a) attending each team's biweekly meetings, (b) leading monthly meetings with the student teachers, (c) working with the CMTs when problems arise, and (d) soliciting input from the teachers for the teacher education program. Program

assistants have been hired for each program to assist each coordinator. Under the traditional triad model, a faculty member was assigned the responsibility of supervising approximately five teacher interns and this supervisory load was equal to a three semester hour course (0.25 FTE). Under the CMT model, the CMT coordinator does not supervise interns; rather, the CMT coordinator works with CMT teams and individual CMTs. CMT coordinators work with 25 to 30 CMTs for the equivalent of one three semester hour course.

Once selected, CMTs participate in a training program with the CMT coordinators which provides the teachers with opportunities for team building, enhancing supervisory techniques, and other professional development opportunities. Team members are responsible for assisting each other in supervision of the interns. This allows the teacher intern to receive evaluations from more than one person and helps the CMT if problems arise. In this program, CMT teams meet biweekly to discuss the supervision process and the teacher interns. The university CMT coordinator joins these meetings to be kept informed about the program. Furthermore, once a month the CMTs hold a staff development meeting for the teacher interns. Another teacher intern meeting is scheduled by the coordinator so that the teacher interns have an opportunity to discuss problems that they might not feel comfortable discussing with the CMTs. Additionally, during each school year, joint university-based and school-based faculty meetings are held to share ideas and discuss important issues.

Procedure

The major part of this study was conducted over a period of two years, with data collected by the research team. The primary mechanism for data collection was semistructured interviews with CMT teams. These interviews focused on: (a) the function of the CMT team, (b) the CMT's relationship with the university faculty, (c) the positive and negative aspects of the CMT program as a whole, and (d) the CMT's views of education. These data collected in these interviews were supplemented with: (a) a sample of CMT lesson evaluation forms used prior to and during their first year in the CMT program, (b) CMT team documentation (e.g., objectives, team meeting minutes), (c) a sample of teacher interns' evaluations of the CMTs, (d) informal interviews with teacher interns enrolled in split placements which

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placed them with a CMT for one half of the semester and a cooperating teacher/supervisor for the other half of the clinical experience, and (f) informal interviews with administrators at CMT school sites.

Data were analyzed using constant comparative analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984). This analysis includes careful reading and rereading of all data by three members of the research team. To produce an accurate presentation of the research findings, as well as to control for researcher bias, data are triangulated across the three researchers and data sources.

Results

As a result of the data analysis, strong patterns emerged. Generally, the findings indicated that the teachers involved in this program experienced growth, particularly in their supervisory abilities. Descriptions of these changes follow in the section below.

Participation in the CMT program seemed to empower and raise the confidence of these teachers, especially in regard to their supervision. Part of this may have resulted from the added responsibilities placed on the CMT. Previously, as cooperating teachers, the teachers deferred to the university supervisor as the person most responsible for providing grades and evaluation. During an informal interview a group of CMTs stated:

> Before, you always had the other person...from the University that came out four times or whatever and watched and that was your grade...it seemed like the cooperating teacher was a little bit removed from the picture. But this---we're there every day... they come in day one, they understand where their grade is coming from.

Another teacher, when discussing the absence of the university supervisor explained: "Before I kept thinking well, the supervisor will catch it, but now I see that I've got to come along. It is easier to give helpful criticism." Another CMT stated that now she "felt comfortable telling them that this didn't go so well." As a result of involvement with the program, another teacher stated: "I feel a lot more confident about the total responsibility for the grade. At first, I was a little anxious about it."

Most CMTs mention their raised status among their colleagues as a positive attribute of the program and an inducement to do an even better job. Several have expressed this by suggesting that the standards for appointment to the program be increased to insure that only the "best" become CMTs.

In a few cases, CMTs have contacted the coordinators to inform them about CMTs who were not fulfilling their CMT duties.

According to the CMTs, their status was also elevated because they felt like peers of the campus-based faculty. For example, one CMT stated: "I really feel an integral part of all of this (teacher preparation)." An important component of the program is the input the school-based faculty (CMTs) provide the university faculty. This has included CMT's participating in methods instruction, collaborating in field experiences, and suggesting curriculum changes. Frequently, in team meetings, CMTs make suggestions to the coordinators regarding the interns' university coursework. For example, secondary CMTs teaching social studies have expressed concern over their teacher interns' levels of content knowledge. The CMTs advocated the inclusion of more upper level social science courses in their programs. Currently, the university faculty is considering changes in the requirements for social science majors, partly as a result of suggestions made by the CMTs. In addition, a small number of CMTs have been involved in NCATE preparation for the College of Education. Other CMTs have collaborated with university faculty on research and have made joint presentations at conferences.

Another important theme that emerged from the data concerned the quality of supervision that was provided for the teacher intern. The CMTs found that the CMT program necessitated better communication and feedback between CMTs and interns, particularly since the CMTs were solely responsible for communicating the positive and negative aspects of their performance to the interns. They also found that they had to address problem areas quickly and make suggestions: "This time let's try this. Then if we tried it and it worked, I would say this worked much better. It was easier when it was down in black and white and you could go over it with that person." Another CMT explained that she learned that communication would be the key to success in her supervision. This led the CMT to state, "I told her that thirty minutes a day was ours. Regardless of what happens...That was one thing I wanted to make sure that I did--communicate...." However, the level of communications in written formal evaluations provided by CMTs showed little difference from their evaluations provided to interns before appointment as CMTs. The nature of their comments (e.g., daily journal entries, formal evaluation forms), the extent of those comments and the number of formal observations remained consistent. One

shift was noted when comparing one teacher's evaluations prior to and after appointment as a CMT--her evaluations written as a CMT seemed to be written for the teacher intern while her previous evaluations were more formal and appeared to be posturing for an audience other than the teacher intern (e.g., the university supervisor, Office of Clinical Experiences).

The CMTs also mentioned that the CMT teams function as support groups and reduce teacher isolation. Regarding the notion of teamwork among the teacher interns, the CMTs teaching at a high school explained that the CMT program makes the "students become closer as a unit because you don't have English, social studies...it's just us and it's all of us." When comparing the traditional triad of supervision to the CMT model, one teacher stated: "I rarely talked to the supervisor, but here, because I had other people in the same situation with me, if I said it was a bad day, how can I say this to her to make her better...it worked out a lot better. I had more support for myself." One teacher commented on the benefits of the team approach to supervising the interns, " Because we all teach in different grades we are able to offer different points of view which I think he (the teacher intern) was able to incorporate...into his teaching and I think he did better then." The importance of having daily support was further described: "Almost every day we (CMTs) ask what would you do--just informal things like that. It has to happen then. It can't wait until... you can set up an appointment."

Although the CMTs formerly viewed the university supervisors as holders of positions of authority (e.g., providing grades), they did not really consider them a member of the team or triad. It appeared that the supervisor was seen as an outsider and, at times, an adversary of the cooperating teacher and teacher intern. In discussing the differences between the university supervisor and cooperating teacher, one teacher explained: "The supervisor is not in the situation and does not know what is going on here; it is like being in an ivory tower coming down to the real world...When you step in from the outside, you don't have the entire picture we have...It may be that the teacher intern will have a conflict with one of us." The idea of conflict between the supervisor and cooperating teacher was further discussed. For example, one CMT stated: "You've got so many chiefs..." Another teacher explained: "They've got to please you, but they've also got to please that person." The CMTs commented that

despite their combining roles of the cooperating teacher and supervisor, the interns didn't see them (the CMTs) as adversaries or "put us in the role of supervisor."

The CMTs further described the problems with the supervisor, one of which was accessibility: "It's hard to steal moments in the hall with a supervisor...I never really had an opportunity to sit down and talk. It is something that you really need to sit down and explain because if there was a comment that she made that you didn't understand, you really didn't have time to go over it...We are all here together and there is time either before or after school--we're just right here with each other." When asked if the elimination of the university supervisor created any problems, CMTs explained that they preferred the addition of the CMT Coordinator who "was much more at our convenience...rather than us fitting into a university schedule. Sometimes you (supervisor) can come and go and we have to live by the bell."

A preference for the CMT model existed for interns who were placed with both a CMT and cooperating teacher, each for half of the semester. When surveyed, 90 per cent of these interns (75 0f 83) preferred the CMT model to the traditional triad. Only six per cent of these students (3) preferred the cooperating teacher to the CMT and this was due to the cooperating teacher's being less demanding. The students preferring the CMT model commented that they did not miss the stress caused by the supervisor's visit. This is interesting to note, since the interns received several observations by other members of the CMT team, yet, they did not view the other CMTs' visits as stressful. Some interns also noted that the university supervisor was distant and not helpful in improving their teaching skills. One intern commented that the supervisor "did nothing but bring confusion" to her internship. However, two students welcomed the involvement of the supervisor. These students appear to have had conflicts with their CMTs and felt they had no one to turn to for assistance.

In addition, CMTs and administrators reported that the empowerment gained through the CMT program produced professional growth and even stronger teaching and supervision by the CMTs. CMTs have become supporters of change and improvement in their local schools. They have advocated and implemented a number of innovations. For example, an elementary CMT team was instrumental in developing and forming multiage classes at their school. After being involved in an innovative

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supervisory program, these teachers felt that implementing change was made easier. Other CMTs were involved in establishing

interdisciplinary teaching and a four period-day schedule at an area high school.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how an alternative to the traditional triad for supervision would influence those involved, with a particular focus on the teacher. Because the selection criteria required the teachers to be exemplary and to contribute extensively to staff development programs and other school activities, little change was expected in these areas. However, their increased self confidence may have impacted their involvement in innovative classroom practices and change in their schools (e.g., multiage classrooms, four-period day) (Emans, 1983). Further, the teachers' perceptions of their abilities were affected positively. These teachers felt more respected by university professors and had a greater sense of their own expertise (Kagan & Tippins, 1993) as they were able to fulfill the obligations required by the CMT Program, including setting goals and agendas for meetings and team supervision.

The CMTs' supervision of the teacher interns was changed dramatically. They accepted full responsibility for supervision, including providing all of the critiques and assigning the grade for the internship. Their commitment to helping the intern to succeed intensified. This was apparent in the increased frequency of their interactions with the intern and their heightened sensitivity to the needs and fears of the interns. While proof is lacking that this increased commitment actually contributed to the intern becoming a better teacher, it is reasonable to expect that result. Certainly, the CMTs thought they had done a better job of supervision than formerly, when they were part of a triad which included a college supervisor. Furthermore, the teacher interns expressed satisfaction with the supervision of the CMTs.

Overall, the findings substantiated previous research in supervision (Boydell, 1986) which suggested that university supervisors were perceived to be ineffective in many areas, including time available and accuracy of assessment. Although CMTs were critical of the university supervisor in the traditional triad, they viewed the university's role in the CMT Program as supportive and positive (Kagan

& Tippins, 1993). This was due both to the coordinators' following the teachers' schedules (instead of the reverse) and the supportive, rather than dominant, role of the coordinator.

Moreover, the participants felt that university resources are used more effectively in the CMT Program than in the traditional triad. University staff work from semester to semester with the same CMTs. Thus, a continuing in-service program is provided to CMTs. Normally, university resources are spent on individual interns and dissipated when interns graduate. By continuing to work over several semesters with the same CMTs, a close working relationship is developing between the university professors and them. Over time, these teachers are more likely to share the same philosophy as the university professors and become familiar with the teaching strategies stressed in the teacher preparation program. Often, teacher educators complain that they are not able to find a sufficient number of excellent teachers to work with interns. The CMT Program holds the possibility of providing a systematic means for the growth and professional development of outstanding teachers who work with interns. The close relationship between the CMTs and university professors may also broaden the professors' views of how theories and teaching strategies may best be implemented in today's classroom.

The CMT program has also strengthened the collegial relationships the teachers had at their school sites. The CMTs team have served as a support mechanism for supervision and helped alleviate feelings of isolation so frequently felt by classroom teachers.

Future research should examine how the teacher interns are affected by the program. Other research should examine whether the theories and philosophies espoused in the teacher education program will be reflected by the CMTs in their teaching and supervision given the long term, in-depth relationship between the CMTs and faculty at the university. Finally, research could explore other ways that this relationship might impact the preparation of teachers.

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